

Description of the Archives and
Library of the Coast and
Geodetic Survey. Dec. 1914.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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The Survey began work in 1817 and since then has published many thousands of navigational charts and technical reports, which are based on the original field, observatory, and office work of its men, as embodied in their records and hydrographic and topographic maps turned into the office. These maps and records are filed according to a system that makes them readily accessible to any one wishing to make use of them, and constitute the Archives of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Here can be found most accurate data (in many cases from 1832 to the present time) in regard to the nature and form of the coast and the sea bottom, tides, currents, navigation, the dip and variation of the magnetic needle and the intensity of the earth's magnetic force, geographic positions and elevations (coastal and inland), the figure of the earth and the condition of the earth's crust, the force of gravity, earthquakes, oyster fisheries, State boundaries, and many other important subjects. These data are useful to the navigator, the marine and land surveyor, the oceanographer, the civil engineer, the geographer, the geologist, the geophysicist, the municipal and private title lawyer, the geodesist, the magnetician, the physicist, the astronomer, the historian, the electrician, State governments, and the man in search of general information. The records, reports, and original maps of the surveys of the Alaskan, Northwestern, Northern and Northeastern boundaries are also filed in the Archives.

In the Archives' records can be read the history of the Survey, a history which shows that the Survey has kept pace with the progress of the

country. This is what the records tell us. First, the Atlantic seaports were charted, then the operations were extended to the whole Atlantic seaboard; next the survey of the Gulf Coast was begun. Then came the discovery of gold in California, and, in 1849, the first surveys were made on the Pacific Coast. In this connection an extract from the 1851 report of the Survey is of interest; "On what coast before has commerce been developed from the outset by the aid of steam, changing all the usual conditions of time, draught, and course? When has it before occurred that a locality (San Francisco) marked on the charts four years ago as a mere trading establishment for skins, should have grown into a city, the fourth --in such a country as the United States--in the amount of revenue collected for the general treasury?" Between 1856 and 1861 a great many records appear in the Archives, which increase is most strikingly manifested in the charts listed for the two years. In 1856 are listed 35 charts of the Atlantic Coast, 15 of the Gulf Coast, and 18 of the Pacific Coast. In 1861 are listed 89 charts of the Atlantic Coast, 55 of the Gulf Coast, and 51 of the Pacific Coast. The Archives from 1861 to 1865 faithfully reflect the Civil War, for, with the exception of records from military reconnaissances, there is no evidence of Southern work. In 1867, Alaskan records first make their appearance in the Archives, showing that the Survey was at work in the new territory in the very first year of its purchase. In 1870, records from inland states began to be sent in, thus recording the fact that in that year the Survey began ¹⁸⁷⁰ work in the interior of the country, which work consists ~~mainly~~ of the determination of geographic positions of primary triangulation stations and the elevations of precise leveling bench marks for the general control of engineering and surveying works by the National Government,

State, and private individuals. Porto Rico records appear in 1899, the year after the acquisition of that island. The Hawaiian Islands were annexed in 1898, and, in 1899, an Hawaiian section of the Archives was started. In 1901, the Philippine Islands began their contribution of records. The records still continue to pour in from the United States, continental and insular, continually adding new valuable material to the Archives of the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

The Archives (which contain over 70,000 volumes of surveying records, and 7000 topographic and hydrographic field maps), are supplemented by a technical library and a map department, these three sections making up what is known as the Library and Archives Division of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. In the Library are 22,500 books and pamphlets comprising fine collections of works (American and foreign) on surveying, hydrography, tides, and currents, navigation, terrestrial magnetism, and geodesy. In the Map Hall are filed 11,000 charts of practically all the maritime chart-issuing offices of the world, and 5,300 maps of the United States and foreign countries.